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National Intelligence Bulletin

September 18, 1975

CONTENTS

PORTUGAL: Deliberations
on cabinet makeup 1

LEBANON: Clashes
continue in Beirut 3



25X1

FRANCE: Another crack
in alliance of leftists 6



25X1

National Intelligence Bulletin

September 18, 1975

PORTUGAL

Portuguese Prime Minister - designate Azevedo yesterday met with party leaders in an effort to resolve the differences between the Communists and center-left Popular Democrats.

According to the US embassy in Lisbon, most portfolios have already been distributed among the major parties—the Socialists, Popular Democrats, and the Communists—and independents. The talks have bogged down, however, because of differences between the Communists and the Popular Democrats over how many portfolios each party will receive.

The Communists have been pushing for equal representation in the cabinet with the Popular Democrats. The Popular Democrats, who polled twice as many votes as the Communists in elections last April, insist that the division of portfolios reflect electoral strength. The Socialists have tried to mediate the dispute but are likely to support the Popular Democrats in an effort to override Communist objections and get the talks started again.

The Communists apparently continue to believe that stalling and playing on the military's fear of Communist armed strength will win them further concessions. At a party rally on Tuesday, Cunhal seemed to threaten the use of force when he said the party would fight to prevent the formation of a right-wing government—presumably any cabinet that excludes the Communists.

The Communists have also suffered setbacks in the labor movement. Although the leaders of the single labor confederation are pro-Communist and are elected for a three-year term, Communist slates in individual unions have lost a series of elections to the combined opposition of the Socialists and the extreme left wing.

Rumors of divisions within the Communist Party as a result of the recent setbacks may help explain Cunhal's threatening tones and determination to force concessions on the formation of a new government.

Cunhal's leadership is being challenged by Carlos Aboim Ingles, a Central Committee member, and others who are unhappy with the party's strategy. A Socialist-oriented weekly has also reported that Cunhal is being challenged by Ingles.

National Intelligence Bulletin

September 18, 1975

Communist influence in the military's top policy-making body, the Revolutionary Council, was further reduced Tuesday when supporters of the Antunes anti-Communist faction were elected to the three air force positions on the Council. The final makeup of the restructured Council will not be known until the army elects its representatives later this week.

The army's six-man delegation will likely be dominated by members of the Antunes group, but apparently the navy's three allotted representatives—who were elected yesterday—are either Communists or extreme leftists. In addition to the 12 service representatives, the restructured Council will include the president, prime minister, internal security chief, armed forces chief of staff, and the chiefs of staff of the three services.



National Intelligence Bulletin

September 18, 1975

LEBANON

Armed clashes continued in Beirut yesterday, and government security forces suffered heavy casualties while attempting to restore order. The fighting was especially intense in the southeastern part of the city, where a Muslim suburb abuts a Christian area controlled by the right-wing Phalanges Party. Beirut radio said today that none of the city's streets is safe and that armed persons are manning barricades in all sections of the city. The radio urged citizens not to leave their homes.

The Phalangists, who were deeply involved in the fighting last June, have threatened to step in again if the government—from which they are excluded—does not call the army into Beirut. So far, the sizable Phalangist militia has limited itself to setting up roadblocks and occasional shelling.

Interior Minister Shamun has said he is willing to call in the army, but he has been opposed by Prime Minister Karami and Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasir Arafat. [REDACTED]

25X1

The cabinet met yesterday to consider whether to use the army, but apparently failed to reach a decision. According to Justice Minister Adil Usayran, the question "will be decided at the next meeting."

Despite the reluctance of Lebanese Muslim and Palestinian leaders to turn to the army, they have been consulting on contingency plans for just such a move. The Beirut press speculates that agreement may be reached under which PLO forces will work with the army, as they have done in northern Lebanon.

The cabinet yesterday did announce creation of a "Committee of National Reconciliation" to arrange talks among the leaders of the country's political and religious factions. The principal leaders of the committee are the same politicians who have been meeting daily in the cabinet, so it is not likely that the new group will come up with any dramatic initiatives to arrest the deterioration in the security situation.

Fighting in Tripoli died down yesterday, as leftists gradually implemented the provisions of the "truce" negotiated Tuesday night. The radical October 24 Movement has released most of the several dozen policemen it had seized, and Christians and Muslims in the area are negotiating through intermediaries to define the buffer zone that separates Tripoli and Zagharta. [REDACTED]

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National Intelligence Bulletin

September 18, 1975

FRANCE

A move by the left Radicals to open a dialogue with the government will further strain the alliance of the Radicals, Communists, and Socialists. This week the left Radical president, Robert Fabre, sought an appointment with President Giscard to discuss "the gravity of the situation" resulting from the government's policies.

The three members of the left alliance had previously refused Giscard's continued invitations to participate in a dialogue between the government and the opposition on the major problems facing the nation. Earlier this year the left Radical leadership dissociated itself from a party vice president who publicly criticized the Communists and said he might support some of the government's programs.

Fabre said he asked for the meeting to begin "the process of returning to normal relations without in any way renouncing our own political objectives." The move will add yet another strain to the credibility of the left alliance, already damaged by the Communist-Socialist dispute over Portugal. The Communists and Socialists will be forced to consider whether Fabre's move warrants expelling the left Radicals from the alliance. More significantly, the Socialists may re-evaluate their own attitude toward dialogue with the government. Socialist leader Francois Mitterrand had told the National Assembly on September 10 that his party had "no objection in principle to returning to a practice interrupted in 1958"—when De Gaulle established the Fifth Republic—and that the Socialists would accept such invitations when they "think it opportune."

The Communist leadership is adamantly opposed to the contacts and sees the willingness of its two allies to talk with the government as further evidence of their half-hearted commitment to the interests of the left and the workers. The Communists have long suspected that Mitterrand is trying to exploit the alliance to boost the Socialists to a dominant position on the left, from which he could forge an alliance with Giscard's government that would effectively exclude the Communists from power.

Giscard, for his part, has been wooing moderate leftists since he took office last May and will probably seek to capitalize on his contacts with left Radical leaders to move them toward cooperation with the government. The center and right wings of the Radical Party already support Giscard. The President hopes not only to broaden the base of his government by extending it leftward but also to reduce his dependence on the Gaullists within the coalition by forming an alliance among his own Independent Republicans, center parties, and moderate leftists. His coalition now holds about 290 of the 490 Assembly seats. Although the 14 left Radical

National Intelligence Bulletin

September 18, 1975

deputies would not alter the power balance in the Assembly if they should bolt the left alliance, their support could offset opposition by some conservative members of the governing coalition to the liberal social and economic programs Giscard plans to present to the Assembly later this year.

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